

ASK JOE . . .

By Arden Miller, CZM

JOE: THE
ANSWER
MAN.



WHAT WOULD BE THE FIRST THREE THINGS YOU WOULD PERSONALLY DO TO PREPARE FOR A HURRICANE?

Well, the first concern would be that I'd have to prepare well ahead of everyone else since I'd have to take care of my stuff before going to the Bunker. [Editor's note: Joe is the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' emergency

management liaison and, as such, serves as part of the agency's Emergency Operations Center—aka "The Bunker"—staff. For more on Joe and the liaison roll, see "Kudos to the Storm Team" page 4. That said...I would secure all my lawn furniture—everything from the beach chairs and toys to the barbeque would have to be tied down—and make sure my family was safe and prepared. I'd make sure all of the things that are supposed to be in the safety kit are there: water, batteries, flashlight, radio, perishables... Lastly, I would take care of my boats. One of them I'd actually sink as it would be safer on the bottom. I've done all of this before, but luckily nothing ever hit.

TRY TO CHANNEL NOSTRADAMUS—JOESTRADAMUS—WHEN AND WHERE DO YOU PREDICT THE NEXT HURRICANE WILL HIT?

For starters, I took this "How Psychic Are You?" test on the internet recently, and out of a possible 100, I got 16, meaning I have NO psychic ability whatsoever! So I cannot even begin to try to predict such a thing.

ARE THERE GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES SPECIFIC TO MASSACHUSETTS THAT WOULD BE IRREPARABLY DAMAGED BY A HURRICANE?

Definitely. In fact, it doesn't even take a full-on hurricane to forever alter geography. In the past, excessive rainfall has caused rivers to flood in such a way that their mouths were permanently altered. In other cases, beaches can be forever changed. One such example is Chatham Beach. During a storm in January of '93, the barrier beach that protected Chatham Harbor was literally split in two. Without the protection of the beach, the buildings downtown were susceptible to all sorts of erosion and flooding, causing a lot of property damage and destruction.



photo courtesy of the Pelczarski photo album

PUTNAM, CONNECTICUT
1955: WORST STORM
JOE'S EVER WITNESSED.

WHAT'S THE MOST DRAMATIC STORM YOU'VE EVER PERSONALLY WITNESSED?

In 1955, when I was four going on five, the east coast was hit with two tropical storms. I lived in Putnam, Connecticut on the Quinnebaugue River and the river completely went. There was a magnesium plant in town that exploded when all the water hit. It was unbelievable—water everywhere. Hundreds, if not thousands, of houses were destroyed. My grandmother stayed with a mentally challenged girl whose own mother had suffered a heart attack from the shock of the flood and both my grandmother and the girl had to be rescued by the Coast Guard. For weeks, everyone in the town had to get their water from the town's filtering plant. During the rest of the '50s and early '60s, the part of town that was level with the river was nothing but dirt and everything left standing was full of dirt. Eventually, it all had to be bulldozed down. Now it's a shopping mall...

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AND HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY SIMILAR DRAMAS HERE?

Hurricane Bob was the first disaster I witnessed from the Bunker. My overall impression was that things were very intense and there was a lot of humidity. I specifically remember that all of the apples fell off the trees and a number of vessels were destroyed. The excessive rains had everyone worried about mosquitoes; at that time the threat of Eastern Equine Encephalitis was very real to people. The state was able to get FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) to reimburse us for spraying (to kill mosquitoes and their larvae). There were only a couple such cases reported within Massachusetts, so we were spared larger dramas.

LAST QUESTION: IF YOU WERE ON THE HURRICANE NAMING COMMITTEE, WHAT WOULD YOU NAME THE NEXT HURRICANE?

Kara, after my four year old niece. She's a little terror!